Water crisis

†*66. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is likelihood of serious water crisis in the country;

(b) if so, whether Government are contemplating to make any policy to deal with the same; and

(c) if so, the outline thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI): (a) to (c) As per the latest assessment made by Central Water Commission (CWC), the average annual water availability in the river systems of the country is assessed at 1869 Billion Cubic Metre (BCM). In 1951 with country's population of 361 millions, the per capita water availability was 5177 cubic metre per year. Now, as per the population census of 2001 AD, the per capita water availability has come down to 1820 cubic metre per year.

According to the international criteria, a situation of annual water availability of less than 1000 cubic metre per capita is considered as scarcity condition. However, it is estimated that due to increasing population, the average annual per capita water availability may further come down to about 1341 cubic metre by 2025 AD and 1140 cubic metre by 2050 AD at the national level. However, due to the spatial variability of rain in the country and also because of variation in population density, per capita average annual availability of water in different basins presently varies from 13,636 cubic metre in Brahmaputra-Barak basin to 298 cubic metre in Sabarmati basin. This is likely to further accentuate in future and by 2050 AD, 71 percent of area covering 75 percent of the population will be facing water scarcity conditions. Further, the temporal variability in the rainfall also creates temporary scarcity of water in certain years.

The National Water Policy adopted in 1987 does recognise that the water resources available to the country should be brought within the category of utilisable resources to the maximum possible extent. It lays emphasis on the conservation of the available resources and its augmentation by measures for maximising retention and minimising losses. Recycling and reuse of water are provided as integral parts of water resources development. Exploitation of ground water resources is directed to be so regulated as not to exceed the

recharging possibilities, as also to ensure social equity. The policy also provides that ground water recharge projects should be developed and implemented for augmenting the available supplies and that the integrated and coordinated development of surface water and ground water and their conjunctive use should be envisaged right from the project planning stage. It recognises the need to make water available to water short areas by transfer from other areas including transfer from one river basin to another, based on a national perspective, after taking into account the requirements of the areas/basins.

In order to meet the water demand for agricultural purposes, Government of India has been extending financial assistance under Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme since 1996-97 to State Governments to help them complete the ongoing irrigation projects early. Government of India is also promoting rain water harvesting through Watershed Management Programme, artificial recharge of ground water and roof-top rain water harvesting under the sector reform project of Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme under the Ministry of Rural Development, for which technical and financial assistance is provided to the State Government and other implementing agencies. Central Ground Water Board has also taken up pilot studies for artificial recharge of ground water. For meeting future requirements of water, as a long term measure, National Water Development Agency have formulated National perspective Plan for water resources development which envisages interlinking between various Peninsular rivers and Himalayan rivers for transfer of water from surplus basins to water deficit basins.

Saline water intrusion in Kerala

*67. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Ground Water Board has initiated studies on increasing saline water intrusion in the coastal belts of Kerala;

(b) if so, the details of the area of the coastal belt affected by salinity intrusion, district-wise;

(c) whether there is an increase in saline water intrusion into the well water especially in Alapuzha and Emakulam districts during summer seasons; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and the remedial measures taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI): (a) to (d) The Central Ground Water Board has initiated studies on